

# Understanding the Florida Alternate Assessment and Your Child's Scores

English



## Information for Parents

English

## How does the Florida Alternate Assessment impact my child?

The Florida Alternate Assessment is designed to provide an option for participation in the state's accountability system in a way that is both meaningful and academically challenging for every student with a significant cognitive disability. Your child's involvement in the assessment can help inform and enhance classroom instruction by providing information on your child's areas of strength and/or areas for improvement.

Florida has a standards-driven system for all students. Florida's *Sunshine State Standards* and **Access Points** for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities drive the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment.

## What are Access Points?

- Access Points reflect the key concepts of the *Sunshine State Standards* with reduced **levels of complexity**. They ensure access to the essence or core intent of the standards that apply to all students in the same grade.

For more information about the Access Points, visit <http://www.floridastandards.org>.

## What are the Levels of Complexity?

Each Access Point has three levels of complexity.

**Less  
Complex**



**More  
Complex**

- The **Participatory** level of complexity focuses on skills at a beginning academic awareness level, such as recognizing parts of a whole or recognizing a letter or number.
- The **Supported** level of complexity focuses on skills that require identifying, recalling, or performing basic academic skills, such as reading words or solving simple math problems.
- The **Independent** level of complexity focuses on skills that require organizing, comparing, and analyzing, such as identifying the main idea of a story or solving more complex math problems.

## What is the Florida Alternate Assessment?

- The Florida Alternate Assessment is a performance-based assessment, not a paper and pencil test. It is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities for whom participation in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) is inappropriate, even with accommodations.
- The Florida Alternate Assessment is administered annually and assesses students in Reading (grades 3–10), Mathematics (grades 3–10), Writing (grades 4, 8, and 10), and Science (grades 5, 8, and 11).
- For each academic area assessed, 16 items are administered to each student individually by the student’s special education teacher, a certified teacher, or other licensed professional who has worked extensively with the student and is trained in the assessment procedures.
- Students enter an item at the Participatory level and continue to work through each level of complexity until they answer a question incorrectly or answer correctly at the Independent level.
- Students typically select an answer to a question from three response options represented by pictures, text, numbers, and/or symbols in a Response Booklet.
- At the Participatory level of complexity only, a process called “scaffolding” occurs when the number of response options is reduced each time a student is unable to respond correctly.

## How is my child’s assessment scored?

Students can score 0, 1, 2, 3, 6, or 9 points per item, depending on the highest level of complexity answered correctly. Students only earn a 0 if they will not engage or they actively refuse to participate in an item at the Participatory level. The student’s total score for each academic area is the sum of points earned for the 16 items. The maximum score possible in each academic area is 144.

## How are my child’s results reported?

- Your child’s results in the Student Report are reported in terms of **Performance Levels** (levels 1–9) that describe your child’s knowledge, skills, and abilities in relation to the established *Sunshine State Standards Access Points*.

## What are the Performance Levels?

There are a total of nine Performance Levels falling within three performance categories: emergent, achieved, and commended.

Emergent			Achieved			Commended		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

- Students performing at levels 1–3 are developing basic knowledge of specific academic skills derived from instruction and practice and may require cueing and/or prompting.
- Students performing at levels 4–6 are acquiring specific academic skills derived from instruction and practice with moderate success.
- Students performing at levels 7–9 have mastered and generalized specific academic skills derived from instruction and practice.

## How will the assessment results be used?

The Florida Alternate Assessment is only one measure of your child's performance and should be viewed in the context of your child's local programs and other measures. Your child's results can be used to:

- identify learning gains;
- assist the IEP team in developing annual goals and objectives;
- inform instructional planning;
- improve your child's achievement in the classroom; and
- monitor progress from year to year.

## How can I get more information?

If you have not received your child's Student Report or would like more information about the Florida Alternate Assessment, contact your child's teacher, District Coordinator, or Alternate Assessment Coordinator. Copies of this brochure can be downloaded from the FLDOE Web site at [www.fldoe.org/asp/altassessment.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/asp/altassessment.asp).



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